

CONCEPT NOTE

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE: A SURVIVOR-CENTERED APPROACH TO GBV

Side event held on the margins of the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Date and time: March 11, 2026, 11:30 – 12:45

Venue: Conference Room D, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Organized by: North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Czechia and UN Women

CONTEXT

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive and underreported human rights violations worldwide, disproportionately affecting women and girls and significantly undermining their ability to access justice, protection, and redress. Despite substantial progress in the development of international and inter-regional normative frameworks, most notably the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - important gaps persist between legal commitments and their effective implementation on the ground.

Women survivors of GBV continue to face structural, procedural, and socio-economic barriers to justice, including limited access to specialized legal assistance, insufficient victim support services, inconsistent application of legislation, economic dependency, social stigma, and inadequate coordination among institutions. These challenges are particularly visible in countries undergoing legal and institutional transformation, as well as in those adapting national systems to evolving EU and international standards.

SUBJECT APPROACH

A survivor-centered approach to justice places the rights, needs, safety, dignity, and agency of survivors at the core of legal, policy, and institutional responses. This approach is critical to ensuring that justice systems do not further harm survivors and that they contribute meaningfully to prevention, protection, and accountability.

The *70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women* provides a strategic opportunity to highlight **innovative, survivor-centered justice reforms and practices from diverse inter-regional contexts.** Drawing on experiences from North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova as EU candidate countries, alongside Sweden and Czechia as EU member states, this side event will foster inter-regional dialogue on strengthening survivors' access to justice in cases of gender-based violence. The discussion will highlight holistic, rights-based, and trauma-informed approaches, grounded in diverse inter-regional experiences while reflecting shared values, understandings and goals of GBV responses. The side event will also address effective models of intersectoral cooperation between public institutions and private sector actors in the prevention of gender-based violence and in ensuring safe and supportive environments for survivors.

Within this broader context, the experiences of **North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Sweden and Czechia,** offer valuable and complementary perspectives. Together, they reflect diverse institutional realities and approaches, united by a shared commitment to addressing gender-based violence:

- **North Macedonia** has gained recognition as a regional leader in combating GBV through the adoption of comprehensive legal and policy frameworks. Notably, the country has aligned its national legislation with international standards, strengthened collaborative policy formulation with civil society organizations, and established specialized legal mechanisms, including the adoption of the Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes.
- **The Republic of Moldova** has emerged as a champion in combating GBV through a combination of progressive legislative reforms, the ratification of international treaties, and innovative, localized approaches to supporting survivors. Key areas of expertise include legal protection against digital violence,

the establishment of specialized institutions, and the empowerment of survivors through a "Positive Champions" initiative.

- **Sweden** is recognized as a leader in combating GBV through a comprehensive, intersectional, and rights-based approach that combines progressive legislation with proactive, long-term societal changes. A core component of Sweden's expertise is its 10-year National Strategy (2017–2026) to prevent and combat men's violence against women, which emphasizes legal, preventative, and support-oriented measures.
- **Czechia** has recently intensified its efforts and demonstrated leadership in GBV, inter alia, through cross-sectoral cooperation, particularly by engaging employers in prevention and survivor support. One of the initiatives is the Charter against Domestic Violence, developed in collaboration with employers, NGOs, and the Government Commissioner for Human Rights.

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The purpose of the side event is to contribute to the global debate at CSW70 on **ensuring women's real, safe, and effective access to justice in cases of gender-based violence**, by promoting survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and integrated justice approaches.

The discussions will contribute to the implementation of **Critical Area D (Violence against Women)** and **Critical Area I (Women's Human Rights)** of the Beijing Platform for Action, highlighting access to justice as a cornerstone of gender equality, peace, and sustainable development. The event will also underscore the practical value of the Istanbul Convention and other international instruments in translating normative commitments into tangible outcomes for survivors.

The panelists will identify **common challenges, good practices, and transferable solutions** rooted in diverse inter-regional contexts, while reflecting shared values and a common commitment to addressing gender-based violence and ensuring that survivors' rights are accessible, enforceable, and responsive to their specific needs.

The side event aims to:

1. **Highlight good practices and reforms** that strengthen survivor-centered access to justice for women and girls affected by GBV.
2. **Share inter-regional perspectives and collaboration** on legal, institutional, and policy approaches from different parts of Europe, as well as Latin America.
3. **Identify persistent barriers and emerging challenges** faced by survivors in justice systems, including underreporting, secondary victimization, economic violence and GBV digitalization.
4. **Promote survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and gender-responsive justice systems** aligned with international human rights standards.
5. **Generate policy-relevant recommendations** to contribute to national, regional, and global efforts to end GBV.

CROSS-CUTTING ADDED VALUE OF THE PANEL

Together, the four countries offer:

- ✓ **Inter-regional learning** (EU and EU candidate countries).
- ✓ A balance between **norm-setting, reform, and implementation**.
- ✓ Complementary perspectives from **established, transitional, and reform-driven justice systems**.
- ✓ Practical insights on translating survivor-centered principles into **laws, institutions, and services**.

**Strengthening Women's Access to Justice:
A Survivor-Centered Approach to GBV**

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Hour	Agenda
11:30 – 11:45	<p>Moderator: <i>Valentina BODRUG-LUNGU</i>, President of the Gender-Centre, Non-Governmental Organization, Republic of Moldova (5 min)</p> <p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Zoran Dimitrovski, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of the Republic of North Macedonia (5 min) - Ms. Viorica Timbalari, Director-General of the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Republic of Moldova (5 min)
11:45 – 12:25	<p>Discussion Panel: Strengthening Survivor-Centered Justice Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Fatmir Sabriu, State Secretary at the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth of the Republic of North Macedonia (7 min) - Ms. Marina Morozova, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Moldova (7 min) - Ms. Lise Tamm, Director-General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (GEA) (7 min) - Ms. Jennifer Solotaroff, Senior Social Development Specialist & ECA SSI Gender Coordinator, World Bank, New York (7 min) - Ms. Lucie Mádllová, Founder and CEO of the Czech NGO Association of Social Responsibility (7 min)
12:25 – 12:40	Questions & Answers - Plenary Interventions and comments
12:40 – 12:45	<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Fatmir Sabriu, State Secretary at the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth of the Republic of North Macedonia (5 min)